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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMCONGEN, LAGOS, NIGERIA

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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

February 16, 1955
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	NEA-4	OC/R-2 OLI-6 P-1 EUR-5 IO-4 REP-2 COM-8
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SUBJECT: Bi-weekly Review January 27 through February 9

POLITICAL

Retirement of Governor-General (UNCLASSIFIED)

It has been officially announced that Sir John MACPHERSON will formally retire as Governor-General of Nigeria on April 12, 1955. Immediately before his departure from Nigeria and return to Scotland, the Governor-General plans a farewell visit to the three Regional capitals and Buea, Southern Cameroons.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Although it has been fairly common knowledge that Sir John intended to retire during 1955, Nigerian political leaders are clearly loath to see him leave. After seven years in office he has gained the respect, if not the friendship, of all except the most intransigent Nigerian nationalists. Despite considerable speculation and direct questioning during press conferences, news of his successor has not yet been released. During his recent visit, however, the Secretary of State for the Colonies implied that Sir John would be replaced by a career officer rather than a political appointee.

Departure of Colonial Secretary and Speaker of the House of Representatives (UNCLASSIFIED)

Both Mr. LENNOX-BOYD and Sir Frederick METCALFE have completed their visits to Nigeria and have returned to the United Kingdom. In a press conference prior to his departure, Mr. Lennox-Boyd categorically assured his questioners that the United Kingdom Government "...stand absolutely by the undertakings given by Mr. Oliver Lyttleton on behalf of the United Kingdom Government as recently as January last year. In recalling that such undertakings promised self-government to any Region which so desired it in 1956, the Colonial Secretary stated that there would be no question of independence at the Federal level unless all Regions concurred.

Pages 1-6 WKCromwell/me/eod
" 7-9 EWilliams/me
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COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY) (See D-106, 1/28/55)

The Colonial Secretary's Nigerian trip was a definite success. During the brief time at his disposal he visited all Regional capitals and met most top political and administrative leaders.

Only one statement from his many Nigerian speeches and press conferences has drawn extensive criticism. During his pre-departure conference he answered a reporter's query as to possible further division of the present Regions by stating that he considered it "tragic" that some should desire a further fragmentation of Nigeria. He pointed out that the world trend is toward political centralization and reminded his listeners of the disasters which had befallen many small states in the recent past.

Since both East and West are anxious to reduce the size of the North and recognize the political advantages of espousing separatist tendancies of tribal groups outside their own Regions, both the Action Group and NCNC press have indicated editorially that they could not consider the existing Regional setup as permanent.

Second Meeting of Federal House of Representatives (UNCLASSIFIED)

It has been officially announced that the House of Representatives will convene for its budget session on March 8, 1955.

Tax Disturbances in Western Region (UNCLASSIFIED)

Riots in the western town of Ogbomosho were brought under control by police reinforcements after 48 hours of sporadic outbreaks. The trouble was occasioned by the attempts of local authorities to collect a recently announced additional six shillings/per capita tax levy.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

The tax as originally announced was to defray certain costs in connection with the Region's Universal Education scheme. After the NCNC directed its fire at the payment of a special tax for the "free" education scheme and quoted AWOLOLO's pre-election promises that existing tax levels would not be increased, AG leaders claimed that the additional six shillings did not represent a tax increase but was an extraordinary levy to pay for public utility improvements in the Ogbomosho district.

The incident is an example of poor planning and preparation by tax authorities coupled with further evidence of the Yoruba's

unwillingness

unwillingness to meet the cost of increased government services by per capita taxation.

By-elections to Eastern House (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Eastern Regional Government has announced that by-elections for six vacant seats in the Eastern House of Assembly will be held under universal adult sufferage. The vacant seats were previously held by recent electees to the new Federal House. All persons over 21 years of age will be eligible to vote regardless of property qualifications.

COMMENT (UNCLASSIFIED)

In common with the other Regional Houses, the present Eastern House was chosen under an electoral college system. The Eastern Region is the first Region to abandon the electoral college system in choosing the regional legislature.

Meeting of West African Governors (UNCLASSIFIED)

A short meeting of the governors of British West African territories (D-105, Jan. 27, page 3) at Lagos on January 28-29 brought scattered press comment concerning the possibility of a West African Federation. Nigerian editors noted the Gold Coast leadership in this movement but generally agreed that such a federation was impractical at the present.

COMMENT (UNCLASSIFIED)

According to government sources the Governor's meeting was informal and largely social. No agenda was followed and no official record kept.

NCNC Policy Dispute (UNCLASSIFIED)

Indications of dissent and feuding within the top echelon of NCNC leaders appeared when Kola BALOGUN, National Secretary of the party, issued a public statement attacking an "unauthorized" policy pronouncement of the NCNC organizing secretary, Mr. Osita AGWUNA. The latter had publically announced NCNC disagreement with the Colonial Secretary's regional policy (see above).

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

There have been several signs that Zik's lieutenants are jockeying for position in posts expected to be created as a result of the party's recent triumph in the Federal elections. The tension is especially apparent between members of the Eastern and Western branches of the party.

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Appointment of Chief Justice Western Region (UNCLASSIFIED)

Justice Adetokunbo ADEMOLA, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, has been appointed Chief Justice of the Western Region. Mr. Ademola, who has served in the Nigerian judiciary since 1939, is the eldest son of Sir Ladapo ADEMOLA, the Alake of Abeokuta.

Eastern Region Local Government Difficulties (UNCLASSIFIED)

Following the Federal elections the press has noted a series of charges and investigations of bribery and corruption in Eastern local government bodies (native authorities or town councils). At least three regional government investigation bodies have been established,,resulting in some indictments and many promises of reform.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

Petty graft and misuse of public funds are hallmarks of Nigerian local government. Apparently the situation in the East, especially in the port cities, has deteriorated below what the normally apathetic Nigerian public opinion will accept.

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LABOR

Northern Region Announces Minimum Wage Levels (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Government of the Northern Region will pay its daily paid workers a minimum daily wage ranging between 1/6d and 5/- . According to the announcement, the rates have been fixed according to geographical districts within the region. Apart from a few urban areas, the majority of the rates are in the neighborhood of 2/-.

ANTUF Advocates Interim Federal Government Wage Increase (UNCLASSIFIED)

Mr. Gogo Chu NZERIBE, General Secretary of ANTUF, has written the Council of Ministers urging that the present salary scale of junior civil servants be increased by 20%, pending completion of a Government salary study being conducted by Mr. G.H. GORSUCH. In his letter, Mr. Nzeribe also urged that the Government adopt a 5/- minimum daily wage pending the results of its wage fact-fanding committee.

COMMENT (UNCLASSIFIED)

ANTUF claimed that the interim measure was necessitated since "...it is now almost certain that the report of Mr. Gorsuch will not be ready for the Budget sessions of the House of Representatives and the Regional Assemblies, as was formerly expected."

Eastern Region Wage Rates (UNCLASSIFIED)

In a public announcement, the Eastern Regional Minister of Labor, Dr. S. E. IMOKE, has denied that his government is committed to the minimum wage rates recently recommended by the government-appointed Wage Commission. (See D-105, 1-27-55, page 4). He stated that the matter is "under study" and that the government's position will be announced shortly.

Lagos Town Council Labor Difficulties (UNCLASSIFIED)

On January 29, officials of the Local Authorities and General Workers' Union filed notice of a trade dispute against the Lagos Town Council and declared their intention to strike 21 days later if their demands were not met.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

The dispute appears to have arisen from political rather than economic or labor considerations, with the NCNC backing the union against the AG-controlled Town Council. It is improbable that union leaders feel the rank and file of their members are sufficiently concerned over the relatively unimportant economic issues to precipitate a strike.

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Northern Region Advertises For Expatriate Officials (UNCLASSIFIED)

In an open letter to the London TIMES, the Premier and other Ministers of the Northern Region have stated that "a welcome and a future await all suitably qualified officials who are sincerely prepared to serve the needs of the people of the Northern Region". The Ministers state that the letter was prompted by a notice of the availability of qualified former officers of the Sudan Government.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

A part of the letter which was ill received by the Eastern and Western leaders concerned the northerners' polite but firm determination "not to impede the progress of neighboring territories by enticing away any of their own all too few indigenous Senior Staff."

Nduka Eze Appointed Union Secretary (UNCLASSIFIED)

After his ejection from the Lagos Town Council, Nduka EZE has reappeared on the labor scene with his appointment as a joint secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Civil Workers of War Establishment in Nigeria.

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ECONOMIC

ROADS

Road Development Program (UNCLASSIFIED)

A five-year development program for improvement of the trunk A roads has been prepared by the Federal Government. It is estimated that the program will cost between £15 and 20 million and will run from 1955 to 1960. A large portion of the funds is expected to come from the Colonial Development and Welfare Grants. The principle features of the program include the improvement and bituminous surfacing of trunk A roads, and building of new bridges and strengthening of existing bridges to bring them to the heavy loading standard. Details of the program will be reported in another despatch.

Nigeria-French Chad Transit Route (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

A recent press report in the "Daily Service" states that the French Chad Government has stopped its transit cargo of imported goods from passing through Nigerian ports, railways and motor roads. According to the report the decision of the Chad Government was believed to be taken as a step to secure better patronage for the port of Duala and to avoid what the Chad Government has considered as too many embargoes and restrictions imposed by the Nigerian Government on goods seeking quick transmission to the French territory. Many transporters along the Maiduguri route trading between Nigeria and French Chad were reported to have decided to close down business as a result of the embargo. The report also stated that the Nigerian Government would lose a substantial revenue in the administration fees on goods passing in transit through Nigeria.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

According to official Nigerian sources no official communication has been received from the French Chad Government concerning the stoppage of transit cargo through Nigeria. The report apparently came from a correspondent in Maiduguri and was published after a reporter had talked to a customs official who inadvisedly stated that Nigeria would lose substantial revenue if the movement of goods intransit through Nigeria was stopped. It is known, however, that the French Chad Government has been anxious for sometime to create a route to the Chad area passing entirely through French controlled territory. So far as is known the road which is being built from Fort Lamy to Garua on the Benue River is not yet complete. Even when a road to Fort Lamy is complete there seems to be little doubt that the cost of moving goods entirely through French territory will be much higher than the present cost of transitting through Nigeria.

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ELECTRIC POWER

Possible Increase in Electric Power Rates (UNCLASSIFIED)

It is reported that talks are being held between the Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and the Federal Government on the possibility of raising electricity rates to enable the corporation to pay its way. The Electricity Corporation has suffered operating losses consistently and is known to be anxious to find some method of reducing its losses. An alternative possibility is that a subsidy from the Government may be sought.

CIVIL AVIATION

Fatal Crash of WAAC Plane (UNCLASSIFIED)

West African Airways Corporation lost a Bristol Wayfarer in a crash on February 5 which killed all 13 persons aboard, including 9 passengers. This was the first fatal crash suffered by the Airline since 1949. A board of enquiry, including experts from the United Kingdom, are now investigating the cause of the crash.

COMMENT (OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

The loss of the plane has upset all WAAC schedules. The Chairman of the Corporation has flown to the United Kingdom to try to arrange the charter of a plane pending the purchase of a replacement which will presumably be another Wayfarer.

AGRICULTURE - COCOA

Black Pod Control - Southern Cameroons (UNCLASSIFIED)

A £15 thousand scheme to assist in the reduction of Black Pod disease has been established by the Southern Cameroon Government. The scheme will be operated jointly by the Cooperative and the Agriculture Department and the Cameroon Cooperative Union. The money for the scheme was provided by the Southern Cameroon Marketing Board. The main feature of the scheme is to provide for the training of cocoa farmers and the provision of spraying equipment, the cost of which will be repaid by the farmers over a period of time.

Finance for New Plantings - Western Region (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Western Regional Development (loans) Board will issue loans for the planting of cocoa only with material obtainable from the nurseries of the Agriculture Department. The credit scheme for this year will be limited to farmers owning cocoa land within a radius of 5 miles from each of 4 Agriculture Department nurseries.

Loans will be

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Loans will be considered for cultivation of a minimum area of three acres and a maximum of five. Loans will not be made for the maintenance of existing cocoa trees but only for the planting on land not already under cocoa. If the experiment proves successful credit facilities are expected to be extended to farmers in other cocoa growing areas of the region next year when the quantity of selected planting material presumably will be increased. The granting of loans is for the purpose of furthering the Western Regional Government's policy for increasing cocoa production in the Region.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT - NORTHERN REGION (UNCLASSIFIED)

The Niger Agricultural Project Ltd., which was formed in 1949 by the Nigerian Government and Colonial Development Corporation has been liquidated. The project proposed to develop on commercial lines a large area of land in Niger Province. The failure of the project to return financial gains resulted in withdrawal of the Colonial Development Corporation. The Northern Regional Government is reported to be planning to take over the scheme as an alternative to its complete collapse. It is reported that under the project some 4,000 acres of land have already been cleared and 6,000 acres partially cleared. It is hoped that the scheme will not only enable uncultivated bush to be opened but that it will develop the production of grain and other crops and rid the area of tsetse fly and also assist in the promotion of more scientific and modern methods of farming.

For the Consul General:

W. Kennedy Cromwell

W. Kennedy Cromwell
American Vice Consul

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